

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 439

By Casada

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Nicholas S. Zeppos upon his outstanding leadership and many accomplishments as Chancellor of Vanderbilt University.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are pleased to recognize a gentleman who has advanced Vanderbilt University's reputation as one of America's best research universities; and

WHEREAS, Vanderbilt University Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos is stepping down from this important post in August 2019 after more than a decade of inspired leadership; and

WHEREAS, a leading voice for higher education and the essential value of academic research at the national level, Chancellor Zeppos co-chaired the bipartisan U.S. Senate Task Force on Government Regulation of Higher Education, which conducted the foremost national study on the high cost of regulatory burdens on America's research universities; and

WHEREAS, he began serving as Chancellor in 2008 in the midst of a historic national financial crisis and navigated the university through the Great Recession; he leaves this leadership role in an era of growing prestige and accomplishment at Vanderbilt; and

WHEREAS, during his remarkable tenure, Vanderbilt's endowment has grown from a low of \$2.9 billion to \$6.4 billion, including \$2.6 billion in new monies; the university's pool of applicants has more than doubled (a ninety-three percent increase), and its national rankings have climbed to new heights (fourteenth in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings and tenth in the Reuters assessment of the world's most innovative universities); and

WHEREAS, Chancellor Zeppos implemented Opportunity Vanderbilt, an expansive financial aid program that eliminated need-based loans for undergraduate students; to date, his signature initiative has supported 10,000 students and raised more than \$400 million for

scholarships, resulting in the recruitment of the most accomplished and diverse students in the university's history; and

WHEREAS, today, more than sixty-five percent of Vanderbilt undergraduates receive financial aid, and Opportunity Vanderbilt has been recognized as the nation's best financial aid program by *The Princeton Review*, which has also recognized the school for having the "happiest" students; and

WHEREAS, committed to maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment on campus, Chancellor Zeppos created the role of vice chancellor for equity, diversity, and inclusion and chief diversity officer and has been an outspoken advocate for the university's imperative to provide opportunities, respect, and safety for all; and

WHEREAS, under his watch, the percentage of first-year students who are minorities has nearly doubled, from twenty-two percent to 42.2 percent; and

WHEREAS, over the past two years, Chancellor Zeppos has led efforts to honor and tell the stories of university trailblazers, including Perry Wallace, who broke the color barrier in Southeastern Conference basketball; and

WHEREAS, he has prioritized the university's investment in faculty advancement, recruiting, retention, and support by initiating the new Chancellor's Faculty Fellows program; during his tenure, the number of endowed chairs has more than doubled from 200 to 426; and

WHEREAS, Chancellor Zeppos has been instrumental in planning and executing Vanderbilt's transformative residential college system, which seeks to educate the whole person; his dedication to holistic living and learning is reflected in the university's FutureVU campus development plan; and

WHEREAS, he has made a \$300 million endowment commitment to new investments in graduate education and research; and

WHEREAS, Chancellor Zeppos led the transition of the university and its medical center into two separate legal and financial entities in 2016, positioning them both for long-term success; and

WHEREAS, he has strongly supported free speech and civil dialogue with a diversity of opinions and perspectives as part of his overall vision for campus culture; Chancellor Zeppos has hosted a range of globally renowned speakers from all sides of the political spectrum and a variety of disciplines, including President George W. Bush, Vice President Joe Biden, former Georgia House minority leader Stacey Abrams, former U.S. Senator Jeff Flake, and leading cancer researcher and author Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee, among many others; and

WHEREAS, in the realm of athletics, Vanderbilt has enjoyed the best run of success in school history during Chancellor Zeppos's tenure, winning four NCAA national championships (a College World Series title in baseball, a national title in women's tennis, and two national championships in women's bowling) in addition to multiple bowl appearances by the football team; and

WHEREAS, he has lately served as the chair of the Association of American Universities Board of Directors; he is also a member of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics and serves on the boards of the Consortium on Financing Higher Education and Vanderbilt University Medical Center; and

WHEREAS, Chancellor Zeppos first arrived in Nashville in 1987 to serve as an associate professor in Vanderbilt's law school; and

WHEREAS, he eventually moved into Vanderbilt's administration, serving the university in various roles, including associate dean of the law school and associate provost for academic affairs; in 2002, he was named the university's provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs; and

WHEREAS, Nicholas Zeppos served as interim Chancellor for seven months, while the Vanderbilt board undertook the search for a permanent leader; the board discovered that the perfect candidate was already in place, and in 2008, Nicholas Zeppos became the eighth Chancellor of Vanderbilt University; and

WHEREAS, his many professional accomplishments aside, Chancellor Zeppos is indeed fortunate to share love and companionship with his wife, Lydia A. Howarth, and their sons, Benjamin and Nicholas; and

WHEREAS, Chancellor Nicholas Zeppos has elevated Vanderbilt University's status as one of this nation's most inclusive and most accessible institutions of higher learning, and he is worthy of our commendation as he departs this office; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor Nicholas S. Zeppos upon his outstanding leadership and many accomplishments as Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, salute his unwavering dedication to higher education and academic research, and extend to him our best wishes for much continued success and happiness in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.